

A MYSTERY PHONOGRAPH

One of the pleasures of collecting phonographs is to find an extremely rare model, but nonetheless, one that is *known* to be rare. In this category would be included perhaps a double-reproducer Polyphone, a glass-sided Zonophone, or a Gabel's Automatic Entertainer. But every once in a while, a phonograph appears that defies any category, a rare phonograph that is otherwise totally unknown. Such is the case with the device on our cover this month.

The entire machine, which sits on a base 11" by 9½", is made of heavily nickeled steel. At first glance it appears as if the machine were intended to sit in a cabinet, but there are four tiny legs under the baseplate which stand independently and there is also a vertical mount for a crane support (visible just under the crank collar). This seems to indicate that the machine could have been displayed as seen here. But there is no known documentation for any machine which even remotely resembles this one. What could have been its purpose?

One clue appears just below the reproducer mount. There can be seen a reverse spiral rod just a bit longer than the standard size mandrel. When the reproducer reaches the end of the record, it activates the little plunger at the side, and a spring-loaded

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the mechanism is obviously the product of a highly skilled manufacturer. The gears have an unusual look to them, a little reminiscent of music box gears. If this is so, then we may have a machine contemplated for production by a music box company, which never got off the drawing boards. Some of the reports about the machine indicate it may have originally come from Rahway, New Jersey, home of the Regina Company. Regina, of course, did make multiple hexophones (6 cylinders) after 1905, but with a different mechanism. If any of our readers can help to identify this mystery machine, we will be glad to share the information in a forthcoming issue. As the machine now stands, it is in excellent condition. with some wear on the leather wheel, and some tightness around the mainspring axle. Otherwise, it is a fine example of a phonograph that is not "supposed" to exist!

If any other of our readers have unusual phonographs, we will be pleased to feature them. After all, some of the people associated with the industry many years ago are still around and may be able to help. Sharp black and white photographs, preferably at least 5" x 7", would be fine. Be sure to describe well and list all patent or other information.

DEAR APM:

Question: When did Jules Levy, the cornetist, first record for Columbia and what were the titles? B. K., Chicago, Ill.

Answer: Just prior to August, 1896. Here is the original announcement that Columbia issued. (Levy had made earlier cylinders for Edison in 1893).

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BOOK REVIEW

AND A DISCOURSE ON STANDARDS OF DISCOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

Tim Brooks

One of the most perplexing problems facing the researcher is how complete and how thoroughly accurate his data should be before he puts it into print. The best known discographers have earned their reputations by diligent work and an almost fanatic refusal to compromise on this point. For example, Brian Rust's various tomes have virtually set the standard by which modern discographies are judged. Walter C. Allen's recent 650-page volume on band-leader Fletcher Henderson is a model of precision and fascinating detail. The book on early Edison cylinder records by APM's Allen Koenigsberg is a significant step forward in its field, as is George Frow's *A Guide to the Edison Cylinder Phonograph* for the machine collector. (Forgive the omission of many other deserving books).

Each of these has its faults of course, and there are collectors who delight in downgrading them -- as well as anything else which gets into print. But they are standard reference works in their respective fields, and for good reason. Their quality did not come easily. Rust and others have spent years of their lives on their chosen subjects, tracking down the most minute details. To add insult to frustration, they must frequently then go into hock to get their work published for the small fraternity of collectors.

Toward the other end of the scale we have "Charlie the Collector". One hesitates to criticize too virulently, because he too may have spent considerable time and money on his project. But the fact remains: his booklet, *When Was That Old Record Made*, is as slipshod as Rust is precise, as sketchy as Allen is thorough.

The booklet is intended to serve as a guide to release dates for "the more common, American, double-sided, 78 rpm records." For each of the 31 labels listed, a chart is given showing the lowest and highest catalog number issued during each year. The period covered in most cases is 1920 - 1958, although two labels (Columbia and Victor) are shown extending back to 1908.

Only one or two numerical series are shown for most labels at any given point in time. Thus for Victor we have the 16000's, for Columbia the "A" series. Personality or specialty series such as Victor's 45000's and 60000's are omitted, as is any reference to 12" discs or to cylinders. (Edison, in fact, is not shown at all). However a number of race and country series is included, Victor's "V" series and 23000's, and Columbia's 14000's among them.

"Charlie" is straightforward about the limitations of his data. A number of words is said about how difficult it is to be precise, and how everything is therefore approximate. His method of determining release dates has been to obtain recording dates from the published discographies and then assume a lag of "several weeks to several months" between recording and release. It is unfortunate that an author would build his research on a premise such as this, when far more accurate sources of information are available. Of course, no one would claim that they are easy to get at; Record company monthly supplements and catalogs, trade magazine reviews, etc., are scattered in collectors' hands and in libraries across the country, and record company files (where they exist) are buried in archives. But the information by and large does exist, and it can be had with diligent digging, a lot of correspondence and "a little help from your friends". That is how Rust et al did their leg work, before they went into print, and it is regrettable

(Con't on page 6)

(Con't from page 1)

device brings the reproducer mount into contact with the spiral thread. Then the entire reproducer, which leaves its contact with the normal feed-screw (below the spiral thread) travels leftward quickly back to the starting point. This pushes a lever to the left of the mandrel and tiny teeth engage a rotating gear which in turn pushes the reproducer mount back onto the feed screw for the next play. There is no automatic shut/off between records, so the machine continues to play the cylinder over and over until the two mainsprings wind down. If this were a coin-operated phonograph, one would expect a shut off between plays.

The question of when this machine could have been made then arises. Another clue lies in the gear arrangement which allows for both two and four minute play. Since the 4-minute cylinder thread was developed in 1908, it seems that the machine must have been made then, and since the reproducer mount will not accommodate a diamond stylus head, it must have been made before the introduction of the Blue Amberol cylinder in 1912. The reproducer found on the machine was a Model H with a sapphire stylus, but it also accommodates a Model C or combination K.

The governor, just below the top circular plate, is enclosed in a little "bird-cage". But the three ball arrangement rests and turns on a jewel, and not a metal pivot. Jeweled governors are unknown on any phonograph up to now. The speed adjustment is a little knurled knob visible just above the governor enclosure, and the on-off switch nearby is a curved piece of metal. But the governor is not driven by a normal gear. Instead, it rests on a hard leather wheel which is spring loaded against a tiny gear under the governor shaft. Since the leather wheel touches this gear, not just at the edge, but $\frac{1}{4}$ " into its radius, the gear has been "sloped" to allow for the different rate of speed along this radius. It really seems that everything has been anticipated!

So what is it? A thorough inspection of the mechanism reveals not a single number, patent, date, or maker. Yet

(Con't on page 2)

ARSC HOLDS CONFERENCE

Allen Koenigsberg

The Association for Recorded Sound Collections recently held its eighth annual conference at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on March 28-30. The ARSC has been attempting to unite many activities in recorded sound research in the United States under a scholarly and institutional umbrella for some time now. Only recently, however, do we see signs that this organization is willing to listen to the collectors who made the study of recorded sound possible.

APM was only able to attend the conference on March 28th, but it was an interesting day. I left Brooklyn around 7 am that morning, and after a mistaken detour to Valley Forge finally arrived at the Sheraton Hotel where the talks were being held. The first one was quite intriguing, and covered an area which we knew little about. Entitled "War on the Ether", it dealt with propaganda broadcasts delivered by the Axis Powers during World War II. Les Waffan, of the National Archives in Washington, D. C., gave a well organized and illustrated talk, along with tapes of the actual broadcasts. He pointed out that work still needs to be done on the background and motives of the propagandists, many of whom were American and British.

The second talk, in a more technical vein, was delivered by Richard C. Burns. Using reminiscences of early performers, manuscripts, and vintage records, he tried to develop an explanation for the various techniques of organ playing. A coffee break and several familiar faces (Ray Wile of Queens College, David Hall of the Rodgers and Hammerstein Sound Archives in New York), and the next talk was under way by Steve Smolian on "Fact and Innuendo About the History of the Recording Industry." Mr. Smolian was very intrigued with the early days of the industry and presented interesting material on political records of the 1890's. From the reaction of the audience, it appeared as if the main interest of ARSC members is in a later period, but hopefully with the discovery and publication of new material, they will find this earlier phase more accessible.

At the buffet-type lunch in the hotel, we had an enjoyable chat with Steve Smolian of Perennial Records, an expert in the LP era. Ray Trent of the Biddle Law Library, 3400 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19104, informed us that he is compiling a discography of early black musical artists and would appreciate any assistance.

Back at the Sheraton, a panel discussion on the training and qualifications of sound archivists was held. Despite a flurry over various definitions of librarians and archivists, it was pointed out that there is currently no textbook available for the teaching of this subject. As far as we could tell, there was only one collector on the panel. Our own favorite archivist is Mrs. Leah Burt of the Edison National Historic Site. Shortly afterward, we met Mrs. Mary Molak of the Eldridge Johnson Memorial in Dover, Delaware,

who announced a forthcoming biography of the founder of the Victor Talking Machine Company by his son. We hope it doesn't follow the example of a recently published article in *High Fidelity Magazine* by Berliner's grandson. I mentioned to Mrs. Molak that several of our readers needed 10" and 12" kraft record folders, and she suggested a source in San Bernardino, called S. A. Lang Kammerer. We checked with Tim Brooks back in New York who added the following sources: *Andrews-Nunnery*, 205 Park Avenue, Hicksville, N. Y. 11801; *Nathaniel Lester Ross*, 2512 West Boulevard, Los Angeles, Calif. 90016; *The Noteworthy Co., Carrybag Division*, 100 Church St., Amsterdam, N. Y. 12010. The Panel ended with a discussion of problems relating to recorded-sound copyright regulations. APM maintained that libraries and non-profit institutions should not be treated like so many record stores, especially since these institutions perform services that the profit-making record companies were unwilling to do.

Supper followed at a local eatery, and we met Mssrs. Gibson and Gray, of the Library of Congress, who are working on a new monograph dealing with all published discographies, since and including their 1962 project "A Bibliography of Discographies." Ray Wile announced that he had good luck during the day in discovering new and important materials on the early history of the phonograph. Present also was charming Mrs. Cynthia Hoover, author of *Music Machines - American Style*, who advised me that her book is now in its third revised printing. It is currently available from the U. S. Government Printing Office in Washington, D. C. 20402.

After dinner, we drove out to visit the private theatre collection of Frank McGlinn, who displayed a beautiful array of historical and fascinating broadsides. An inveterate collector, whose interests extended also to political Americana, he was a gracious host indeed to have us tramping through his house.

Another piling into cars, and we were back at the Sheraton. First for a talk by Edgar Hutto of the Engineering Staff of RCA in Camden. Mr. Hutto presented a mixed-media style talk, with slides, music, pictures, and interspersed comment. He had literally hundreds of slides, some of which stayed on the screen for less than a second. The net effect of this was impressive, but one wished that some were left longer. Mr. Hutto was fascinated by scenes of buildings being torn down and new ones being erected, but a few phonographs appeared here and there. It was an adulatory presentation, with nothing of the drama or controversy that surrounded Johnson's early career.

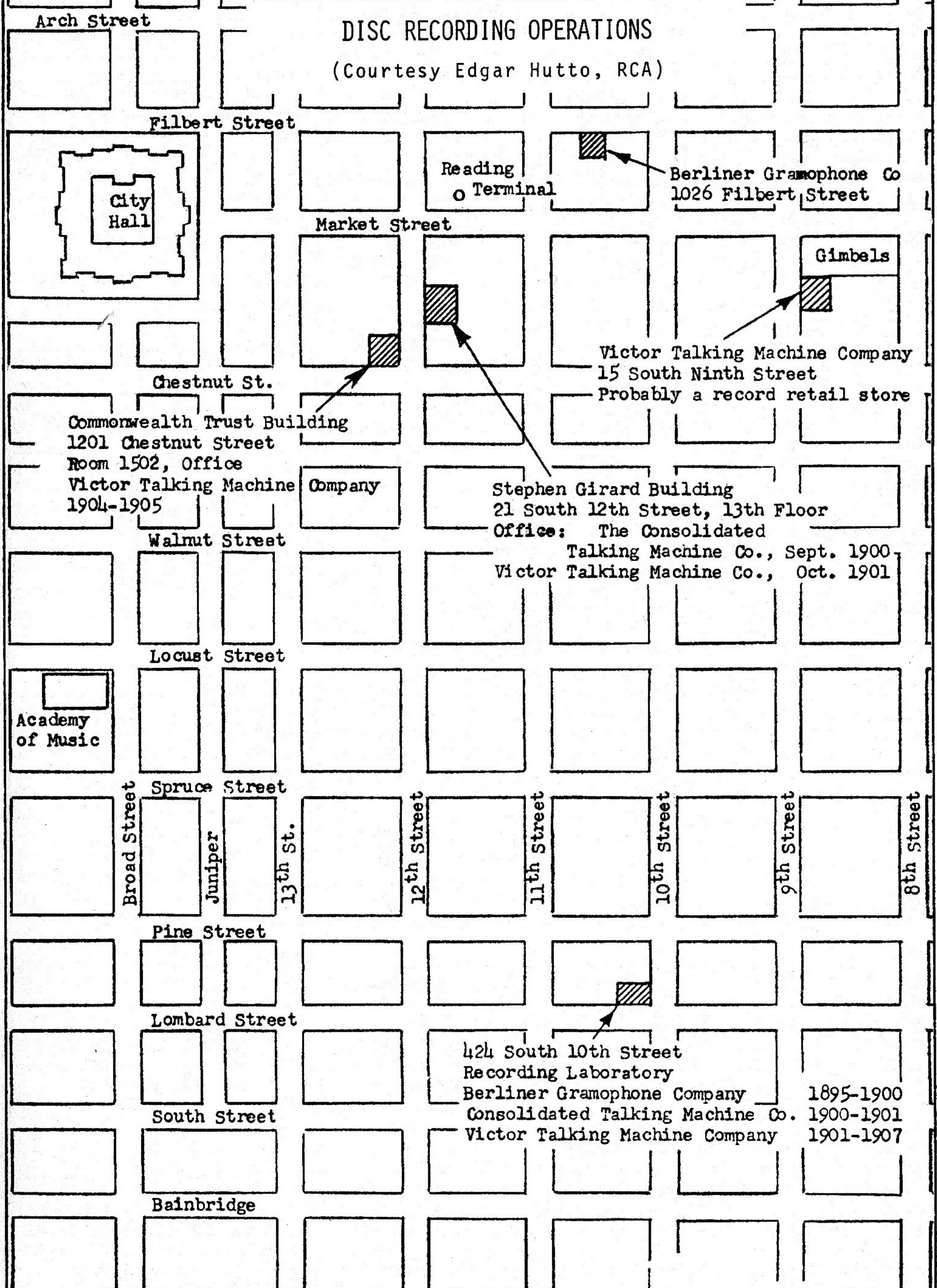
The last talk of the evening was given by Don Wetzell of the Evangelical Foundation Inc. and included methods of tape editing. Mr. Wetzell was genuinely concerned with the problem of making one's audio collection accessible as well as creative and his "sound quiz" was thoroughly enjoyed by the audience.

A few quick goodbyes and back to Brooklyn by 3 am! A long day and only thoughts of sleep and getting the next issue of APM out.

PHILADELPHIA LOCATIONS FOR EMILE BERLINER AND ELDRIDGE R. JOHNSON

DISC RECORDING OPERATIONS

(Courtesy Edgar Hutto, RCA)



(Con't from page 3)

that "Charlie" did not do the same.

I have checked "Charlie's" data against a considerable amount of scattered but precise information on half a dozen labels, both early and late, drawn from published monthly supplements and from company files. In the vast majority of cases the number given by "Charlie" as the initial issue for the year is actually the point reached by March, April or May of that year. In other words, in most of the four - dozen cases I checked, the author is off by three to five months.

There are worse errors mixed in. Columbia is shown as starting at No. A601 in 1910, when they had already passed this point in late 1908. Their "D" series began in 1924, not 1923. The number shown as the Victor starting number for 1919 was not actually reached until October of that year. Brunswick was issuing discs in their familiar 2000 series in 1920, not starting in 1922 as "Charlie" shows (there was also an early 5000 series, which he does not mention). In only one instance out of four dozen was "Charlie's" yearly starting number correct (16821 is a reasonable starting point for Victor, 1911).

The author estimates that his booklet will provide the correct year of issue in 90% of all cases. However, if one assumes an even pattern of issues throughout the year, and if "Charlie's" yearly starting numbers are off by an average of four months, then about a third of all the records he covers would be erroneously dated. However, we must add to this unavoidable errors due to discs released out of sequence, which is presumably what the author refers to by his 10% figure. So, in total, nearly half of the records covered by *When Was That Old Record Made* appear to have been assigned the wrong year. The unfortunate part is that most of these errors could have been avoided.

At the end of his introduction, "Charlie" asks collectors to send him any corrections or additions they may have for possible inclusion in a future (copyrighted?) booklet. Since there appears to be little in his book which is correct to begin with, I have refrained from doing so. The entire project would have to be started from scratch.

For the reader who wants some kind of interim guide to release dates -- "until the real thing comes along" -- I would suggest Arnold Stillwell's *Record Dating Chart*, which is still being sold 25 years after its original publication in the *Record Changer* (ca. 1948). It is not a great deal more accurate than *When Was That Old Record Made*, but it covers more labels, is easier to read (in wall chart form) and costs less. It is available from Arnold's Archives, 1106 Eastwood S.E., East Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506, for \$2. *The Record Dating Chart* covers only 1920-1930, but at last report, the seller was enclosing xerox copies of another Dating Guide compiled by Arnold Feher which continues up to 1946.

It is unfortunate that a review such as this is necessary, but there comes a point at which platitudes and charitable compliments simply serve to deceive the reader. Which brings us back to the starting point, and to the subtitle of this little discourse, standards of discographical research. There is a great deal of research which needs to be done in the field of early phonographs and recording. Certainly there is a need for a convenient and accurate guide to tell us when records on various labels were first released to the public. But erroneous information put into print, and given wide circulation (as "Charlie" seems to be aiming for, with advertisements in various journals) is often worse than no information at all. In a sort of scholarly version of Gresham's Law, bad information may drive out -- or preempt the market for -- more accurate research which follows. I hope that *When Was That Old Record Made* does not have that effect. It is available for \$3.00 ppd. from Charles Hager, 7048 Cliffbrook, Dallas, Texas 75240.

NOTICE

Please correct Tom Hawthorne's address in the APM Directory to 838 TERESI CT. #2, SAN JOSE CALIF. 95117. Thank you.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Details needed for any records with following labels, or any catalog material relative to these labels: American, Apollo, Aretino, Busy-Bee, Canadian Berliner, Clear Tone, Clico, Concert, Eagle, Excelsior, Imperial, Kalamazoo, Leeds, Lyric, Manhattan, Nassau, Oxford, Phono-Cut, Royal, Siegel Cooper, Silver Star, Sir Henri. BILL BRYANT, 1046 CONGRESS ST. PORTLAND, MAINE 04102.

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| Speaker arm or trunion complete for Columbia Type A Graphophone. JOHN STEFFEN, EASTVIEW PHARMACY, 573 KING ST. E., OSHAWA, ONT., CANADA. | Uncle Josh cylinders or Edison fat records with Uncle Josh. Also Edison Xmas records. DON THOMPSON, 609 SHELTON, DALLAS OREGON 97338. | PRINTED ITEMS FOR SALE |
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THE TALKING MACHINE REVIEW INTERNATIONAL: A bi-monthly magazine for all interested in cylinder or disc phonographs; the firms who made them; the artists on the cylinders or discs; repairs; and all the many other facets of the history of recording. Annual subscription: \$4.00 (or \$8.00 by airmail). Write for free sample copy if genuinely interested. We have an expanding list of reprints of interesting old catalogs, posters and books. Write for details. THE TALKING MACHINE REVIEW, 19 GLENDALE RD., BOURNE-MOUTH, ENGLAND, BH6 4JA.

Facsimile Catalog of Roller Organ Cobs for Gem and Concert Roller Organ: 12 pages, 3 illustrations, hundreds of titles \$2.00 ppd. KOENIGSBERG, 3400 SNYDER, BROOKLYN, N.Y. 11203.

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Facsimile Reprint Catalogs: #20, 1902 BETTINI PHONOGRAPHS AND SUPPLIES; #21, 1878 EDISON TINFOIL PHONO MANUAL; #22, 1906 EDISON COIN-SLOT PHONO CATALOG. \$9.95 ppd. for all three. A. KOENIGSBERG, 3400 SNYDER, BROOKLYN, N.Y. 11203. (50¢ extra for first class.)

PRINTED ITEMS WANTED

Books, catalogs, etc. pertaining to popular, jazz and comic recording artists of 1920's. Please give description, condition and price. NORBERT L. SWIETON, 1452 N. TALMAN AVE., CHICAGO, ILL. 60622

Original catalogs for my Brunswick "Period" upright phonograph with electric motor & three way reproducer. (Five upright sliding drawers hold records.) JOHN E. MURDOCK, 870 GAYLENE COURT, CONCORD, CALIF. 94518.

ITEMS FOR TRADE

Have incomplete Cailophone Coin-op.; Concert Zonophone. Would like to complete or may trade. Write: DENNIS TEUSCHER, 681 WEST 3400 SOUTH, BOUNTIFUL UTAH 84010.

Will trade one original copy of TINFOIL TO STEREO for one 5" pink Lambert cylinder in original box. A. KOENIGSBERG, 3400 SNYDER, BROOKLYN, N. Y. 11203.

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Old magazines entitled *Camera Work*. Good prices paid. Cameras in odd shapes, like cane, binoculars, cigarette lighters, guns, etc. Please describe & price. AL WEINER, 392 CENTRAL PARK WEST, (16-R), NEW YORK, N.Y. 10025.

Information on old glass phonograph horns. KOENIGSBERG, 3400 SNYDER, BROOKLYN, NY 11203

Country Western blue amberols; 1930-31 Brunswick record catalogs; Victor Talking Machine Co. record brush (round celluloid); pre-1912 Edison record supplement; fibre governor worm wheel (gear) for Edison Opera. E. G. ANDERSON, 326 W. CHEVY CHASE #7, GLENDALE, CAL 91204.

I need information on mandrel phonographs, parts, catalogs, etc. KEN HICKS, 420 S. 117th, TACOMA, WASH. 98444.

MISCELLANEOUS WANTED

Need information on old typewriters? Send SASE to: DON SUTHERLAND, 15 JAY ST., NEW YORK, N. Y. 10013. Will buy Or trade for old typewriters needed for research.

Preparing mailing list for sale of records, player rolls, collectors items, etc. Send full name and address and interests - list will be made up shortly. NOSTALGIA, 20 HARRIET DRIVE, WHIPPANY, N. J. 07981. (4-74)

Want info on music boxes, phonos, nickelodeons, other musical mechanical devices, etc. A. W. KELLEY, 1715 LADINO RD. SACRAMENTO, CAL. 95825.

Need early motor only for Regina 15½" Music Box. Will buy or trade. CHARLIE HUMMEL, 61 LAUREL DRIVE, WAYNE, N. J. 07470.

Buying records, books, phonographs. Trading rare records for others. STANLEY T. CARR, 314 N. BRODIE ST., THUNDER BAY (F), ONT., CANADA.

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